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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 7th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 10 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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1. **Mr. Nduhuura** (Uganda) said that the Sahrawi people had patiently waited for the United Nations to implement General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), thereby enabling them to exercise their right to self-determination. Instead, Western Sahara — Africa's last colony — remained under foreign occupation. A significant portion of the Territory was illegally occupied by Morocco, which, over the previous 25 years, had continuously obstructed the referendum process to which it and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario) had agreed under the United Nations Settlement Plan. Meanwhile, Sahrawis were denied the right to live peacefully in their own land, even as some of them endured harsh conditions in refugee camps, and were subjected to systematic violations of their human rights and the theft and plunder of their natural resources.

2. To make matters worse, Morocco had expelled civilian and military personnel of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in March 2016, and the Frente Polisario's armed forces had crossed into the restricted zone in the Gargarat area in August 2016, violating the ceasefire agreement concluded by both parties. Those actions imperilled the United Nations-led political process. The Security Council's inability to enforce its own decisions with regard to the Territory and to secure access to it by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, who had not been able to visit since 2012, further illustrated its limitations in upholding its mandate of maintaining international peace and security in the case of Western Sahara.

3. It was therefore up to the General Assembly to take the necessary steps to bring the decolonization of Western Sahara to fruition. In that connection, his delegation supported the call for the Assembly to determine a date for a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people and for the Special Committee on decolonization to undertake an official visit to Western Sahara and the refugee camps in southwestern Algeria and to hold a special session on Western Sahara. The Committee must fulfil its promise to the people of Western Sahara, who had trusted and faithfully collaborated with the United Nations despite the injustices they continued to endure at the hands of their aggressor. Failure to resolve the impasse through diplomatic means was bound to result in further conflict in a region already troubled by violent extremist terrorism.

4. Lastly, in the case of Palestine, Uganda supported the resumption of the peace process, with a view to implementing the two-State solution.

5. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that as one of the initiators of the historic Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, his country had been a strong and consistent advocate of decolonization. The complex challenges facing the contemporary world extended to the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories as well. In discharging the mandate of helping guide those Territories to independence and sovereignty, the Special Committee and the Committee must therefore understand the particular circumstances of each Territory and take into account the welfare and wishes of the people above all. His Government was proud to have been associated with the Organization's successes in the area of decolonization and remained committed to carrying out the Committee's mandate in that regard.

6. **Mr. Nkoloi** (Botswana) said it was regrettable that 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained on the agenda of the Special Committee, including Western Sahara, the last African colony. He expressed concern that despite the efforts of the United Nations, the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, the Sahrawi people continued to be denied their right to self-determination and independence. His delegation encouraged the parties to the dispute to approach negotiations in a spirit of compromise and mutual respect in order to reach an agreement. The will of the people, as expressed in a democratic and open referendum, would have to be respected by all. In the meantime, the international community must redouble its efforts to support the negotiations that would culminate in self-determination for the Sahrawi people. Security Council resolution 2285 (2016) had extended the mandate of MINURSO for another year, but the Mission could achieve its objectives only if all parties mustered the necessary political will.

7. **Ms. Onanga** (Gabon) said that the Organization should make an even greater effort to eliminate the remaining obstacles to decolonization; it should also help the Territories to narrow their gaps in terms of the crucial information they needed for self-governance, and to advance their economic and social progress, with a particular focus on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and combating climate change.

8. On the question of Western Sahara, Gabon supported efforts to ensure a lasting, mutually acceptable political solution to the dispute under the aegis of the United Nations. Regional security challenges should remind the international community of the urgent need to revive the negotiation process. Gabon welcomed the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a credible means of ending the current impasse and reaching a lasting agreement, and praised the steps Morocco was taking to advance human rights, improve the humanitarian situation and introduce political, economic and social initiatives in the Sahara region. All the parties must compromise and engage actively in substantive negotiations in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. All the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region should also join together to ensure stability and development in order to minimize the destabilizing effects of the rampant terrorism in the area.

9. **Mr. Koyma** (Central African Republic) said that, given the specific nature of certain decolonization cases, it would be judicious to refrain from taking radical positions whose consequences would be impossible to predict. Notably, the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara had been at a stalemate for forty years as a result of the rigid positions of certain parties, which had continually worked to thwart the many settlement plans proposed over the years. As a result, since 2004 the Security Council had endorsed the negotiation of a mutually acceptable political solution as the only viable way of settling the dispute.

10. International agreements that recognized the Sahara region as a historic part of Morocco, the significant economic investments made by Morocco to develop the region, and the recent holding of free and democratic elections that had put many Saharans in public office, all attested to its belonging to Morocco. His Government continued to support the 2007 Moroccan autonomy initiative for the Sahara region, which had been described by the Security Council as serious and credible, as well as the United Nations-led negotiation process launched in support of that initiative. He echoed the Security Council's call on all parties to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and to enhance their cooperation with the United Nations and with one another, with a view to resolving the dispute and thereby contributing to regional security and stability. Morocco had made a welcome decision to return to the fold of the African Union (AU), and that decision did not in any way constitute a renunciation of its legitimate rights or the recognition of a fictional entity that lacked the most basic attributes of sovereignty.

11. **Mr. do Rego** (Benin) welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to establish an honest and constructive dialogue between the parties to the dispute over Western Sahara, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. Benin looked forward to positive developments as a result of the various Moroccan initiatives, which could provide the basis for substantial, credible, good-faith negotiations. All parties involved should show a spirit of compromise in order to reach a just and mutually acceptable settlement of the question of Western Sahara. His delegation also hailed the decision by Morocco to return to the African Union; as one of its founding members, it had over the years constantly strengthened

its relations with other African countries, working with them to attain the shared objectives of combating poverty and achieving development.

12. **Ms. Mac Donald** (Mozambique), expressing regret that Western Sahara remained on the Organization's list of Non-Self-Governing Territories despite the many efforts made and resolutions adopted to promote its self-determination over the previous four decades, said that action was needed to enable its people to exercise that right. A mutually acceptable political resolution to the question of Western Sahara had to be found. With that in mind, the former President of Mozambique in his capacity as Special Envoy of the African Union for Western Sahara had spoken out in favour of the self-determination referendum, and urgent steps should now be taken to set a date for holding it. Furthermore, MINURSO must be provided with the necessary civilian staff and adequate financial resources to fulfil its mandate, and it must be given a human rights mandate, taking into account the need to ensure sustained independent monitoring in both the Territory and the refugee camps.

13. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that his country, fully aware as a former colony of the evils associated with colonialism and imperialism, supported the consistent call of the General Assembly for the self-determination and independence of the people of Western Sahara, the last vestige of colonialism in Africa. The United Nations must uphold its responsibility to ensure that the peoples of all 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories achieved self-determination.

14. The African Union, mindful of the 1975 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice affirming that Morocco had never had any tie of territorial sovereignty over Western Sahara, had called for the United Nations General Assembly to set a date for the mandated referendum on self-determination, and urged the Security Council to address the human rights issues and the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Territory; while also advocating that MINURSO be given a human rights mandate in addition to its primary mandate to supervise the referendum.

15. The success of the just struggle of the people of Western Sahara for self-determination was a prerequisite for the peace, security and stability of the African continent. The situation of the Western Saharans in refugee camps in a foreign land was a direct consequence of the Territory's colonization, and should not be used as a distraction from the root cause. They would not be there if all had been well in their homeland.

16. The continuation of direct negotiations between the Frente Polisario and Morocco was essential to expedite the holding of the long-awaited referendum. Especially in view of the derailing of the United Nations Settlement Plan in the past by one of the parties, it was disturbing that, despite several meetings between the two, no meaningful progress had been made. If all Member States supported the mission of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, that would surely give new impetus to the process. The observance of a ceasefire for 25 years by the Sahrawi people proved that they wished to achieve self-determination peacefully. The Security Council's repeated extension of the mandate of MINURSO — which was to supervise the referendum — demonstrated the Council's resolve to ensure that the long-overdue popular consultation would be held.

17. **Mr. Tilman** (Timor-Leste) said that the Committee, which had played an important part in the realization of his country's right to self-determination, continued to have a crucial role in achieving the Organization's priority goal of eradicating colonialism. Colonialism was a denial and underestimation of the worth of the basic human right to self-determination, and the continued existence of any form of colonialism impeded the economic development and well-being of dependent peoples. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), as well as the Constitution of Timor-Leste, enshrined the right of all peoples to self-determination. His country's young generation of diplomats was conscious of its recent history and particularly the role of Timorese leaders, who had lobbied and raised their issues much like the petitioners who had spoken in favour of the right of their peoples to determine their future.

18. The colonial pasts of Timor-Leste and Western Sahara shared many similarities. Both had been invaded by their immediate neighbours upon the withdrawal of European Powers in 1975. Like the people of Western Sahara, the people of Timor-Leste had been subjected to grave human rights violations. Both had been the subject of United Nations

resolutions on self-determination. However, unlike Timor-Leste, where a popular consultation had been held, Western Sahara had not been able to exercise that right. The two peoples' similar struggles for justice had laid the foundation for a strong friendship and solidarity between them. Upon independence in 2002, Timor-Leste had established full diplomatic relations with the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic. It still stood in solidarity with the Sahrawi people as they continued to strive for self-determination and a lasting solution on the basis of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

19. **Mr. Vujić** (Serbia) said that his Government's position on the dispute over Gibraltar was based on international law and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States. Recalling that Gibraltar was a Non-Self-Governing Territory and that General Assembly resolution 2070 (XX) mandated that the question of Gibraltar should be resolved through bilateral negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom, he noted that only the United Nations could determine when the decolonization process in a Territory had satisfactorily concluded. His delegation endorsed the Spanish proposal regarding the administration of Gibraltar and called upon the two parties to resume negotiations with a view to reaching an enduring settlement, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

20. **Mr. Sumah** (Sierra Leone) said that self-determination, an inalienable right, required the colonized peoples themselves to make an unconstrained demand for its exercise. The Secretary-General and the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs had made commendable efforts to achieve decolonization. While the principle of self-determination should be realized on a case-by-case basis in the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, the destiny of their people was in their hands. The United Nations should thus respect their political aspirations and the path they chose, whether it be self-government, autonomy, free association or some other option suitable to their circumstances.

21. Although the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would end in fewer than five years, the prospect of achieving its goals was not encouraging, and the support of the administering Powers was therefore crucial. The Special Committee and the administering Powers needed to collaborate closely and regularly in an atmosphere of mutual trust with a view to identifying areas or activities that were achievable and that required further engagement.

22. Sierra Leone commended New Zealand for its exemplary support to the people of Tokelau and praised the Government of France for improving the Kanak people's access to economic and social benefits in New Caledonia and for respecting their cultural heritage. More effort should be devoted to higher education for the indigenous people in order to place them on a more professional footing in the area of governance.

23. On the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), peaceful, constructive negotiation remained the only credible option for achieving sustainable peace. The Secretary-General was urged to use his good offices to engage the concerned parties in dialogue.

24. The ongoing political process led by the United Nations on the question of Western Sahara aimed to achieve a mutually acceptable and negotiated political settlement of that regional dispute, in the spirit of compromise recommended in the Security Council resolutions on the matter. There had been welcome cooperation by Morocco with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara in his several visits to the region the previous year in the hope of furthering a mutually acceptable political solution that would bring sustainable peace and progress to the people of Western Sahara.

25. Sierra Leone supported the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a credible way to achieve a political solution to that long-standing dispute. Enhanced cooperation among the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union would certainly contribute to stability and security in the Sahel region. Morocco had made considerable efforts to improve the human rights situation in the Sahara region and had made strides in the area of development, an essential human right. It had also held municipal and, for the first time, regional elections in the Sahara region in September 2015.

26. The Chairperson of the African Union was also trying to facilitate a lasting settlement. The fact that the AU Peace and Security Council had decided to consider the question of Western Sahara at least twice a year clearly indicated the organization's readiness to assume a greater role in the crisis.

27. **Mr. Hickey** (United Kingdom) said that his Government's relationship with its Overseas Territories was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of each Territory's people to choose to remain British. His Government and its Territories recognized that their relationship brought mutual benefits and responsibilities. Since the 2012 publication of its white paper on the Overseas Territories, his Government had worked closely with them to further develop those partnerships. Annual meetings with their elected leaders in a Joint Ministerial Council reviewed strategy and commitments, and the Council had affirmed, in 2015, its commitment to the advancement of the peoples of the Territories and their just treatment and protection from abuses, as well as the importance of promoting their right to self-determination.

28. Thus, his Government's fundamental responsibility and objective under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, was to ensure the security and good governance of the Territories and their peoples. Territory governments were expected to meet the same high standards as the British Government in maintaining the rule of law, respect for human rights and integrity in public life, delivering efficient public services and building strong and successful communities, and were being supported by his Government in those areas. Welcoming continued democratic development, the United Kingdom looked forward to the coming elections in the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands. In the March 2013 Falkland Islands referendum, the overwhelming majority had expressed the wish to remain a British Territory, demonstrating his Government's ongoing commitment to the future development and continued security of the Territories in accordance with their wishes. His delegation welcomed the United Kingdom-Argentina joint communiqué of September 2016, in which Argentina agreed to take appropriate measures to remove all obstacles limiting the sustainable development of the Falkland Islands, including in trade, fishing, shipping and hydrocarbons, as well as agreeing that the Falklands were free to set up flight connections with other countries in the region.

29. Lastly, the United Kingdom reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to the people of Gibraltar. It would neither enter into arrangements under which the Territory's people would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes nor participate in a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar was not content.

30. **Mr. Buhler** (France) said that his country had cooperated fully with the United Nations on the question of New Caledonia for the past twenty years and intended to continue to do so, and each year it had fulfilled its reporting obligations under Article 73 *e* of the Charter. In 2016, on France's initiative, New Caledonia had welcomed a four-month United Nations expert mission whose aim had been to observe the review of the provincial special electoral list for the election of members of provincial assemblies and congresses and the initial drawing up of the list, in preparation for New Caledonia's self-determination referendum. All the partners involved had noted that the experts' presence had fostered a peaceful atmosphere during the conduct of the work, which his Government welcomed. The experts had made themselves available to any political groups that wished to speak to them both during meetings of the official restricted working group and during bilateral meetings requested by the groups themselves. Both France and its New Caledonian partners considered that the United Nations mission had gone well. Although they had suggested improvements to working methods, the experts had not detected any electoral fraud. His Government was committed to the proper conduct of the political and democratic process that would allow the New Caledonian people to decide by 2018 whether they wished to remain a part of France or not. It had already received the expert mission's electoral recommendations and was taking steps to implement them.

31. Fully intending to carry out its role of arbiter, France remained in general an attentive and benign partner to New Caledonia. It participated in the overhaul of the local government by continuing to contribute a very high financial sum towards promoting development in the Territory. It oversaw the proper functioning of the local authorities and ensured that the particularities of Kanak culture were taken into account. It sought to have the various New Caledonian factions reach common positions on sensitive subjects in view of their impending shared destiny.

32. Since the mandated redistribution of political powers between his Government and New Caledonia under the Nouméa Accord in 1999, France had proceeded to comply progressively and irreversibly, while providing compensatory funds for the human, material and financial resources needed. In the spirit of that agreement, the progressive expansion of the powers devolving to the New Caledonian authorities, and their ability to participate in foreign affairs and create their own legal system and set of laws, all prepared the Territory for eventually acceding to full sovereignty, if it so desired. With regard to the conduct of foreign affairs, France had fully supported and welcomed the fact that New Caledonia had recently been unanimously admitted as a full member of the Pacific Islands Forum.

33. His Government had been particularly invested in guiding the New Caledonian people transparently and productively towards the choices they must make by 2018. To that end, it would soon request the sending of a new mission to support the review of the special electoral lists in 2017.

34. **Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria) said that, as those responsible for dealing with the shameful legacy of colonialism, Member States had failed to complete the task of decolonization. Algeria was unwavering in its commitment to the Special Committee's mandate to free the world from the scourge of colonialism. There were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories on its agenda, and its report (A/71/23) outlined several commendable initiatives during the 2016 session, including the regional seminar on decolonization hosted for the second year by Nicaragua, the revival of the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories at the United Nations, and the organization of a conference on decolonization, of which Algeria had been a sponsor.

35. The conflict in Western Sahara, the last colonial Territory in Africa, pitted the Frente Polisario, the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people, against Morocco, and could be resolved only through the people's full, free and fair exercise of its inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the 1975 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and pursuant to successive Security Council resolutions consistently reaffirming that right to self-determination. Yet the past year had brought no positive news and the parties to the dispute remained at a stalemate. Those who were blatantly fanning the flames of discord had forgotten that the referendum was not just a decision made by the United Nations, but also a negotiated compromise accepted by the two parties to the conflict, who must now abide by it.

36. The Security Council's surprising inaction had only strengthened the resolve of the Sahrawi people, who had never yielded to despair or resorted to anything but peaceful means since 1992. They deserved, more than ever, stronger support from the international community, and particularly from the Fourth Committee.

37. The question of Western Sahara was an African issue and the African Union had made advancing the cause an urgent priority. Indeed, the 1991 United Nations Settlement Plan had drawn on proposals made by the Organization of African Unity. Algeria had advocated enhanced interaction between the United Nations and the African Union on all issues on the Security Council's agenda related to Africa; and the AU had in fact made contributions by taking positions on Western Sahara or dispatching its Special Envoy for Western Sahara to brief the Security Council.

38. The conflict in Western Sahara risked destabilizing the entire region because it attracted terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational crime. That should serve as an additional reason for resolving it through peaceful means as soon as possible. His delegation supported the fifth round of negotiations between the two parties called for in the latest Security Council resolution so that they could show their good faith. The Secretary-General had honoured his promise to visit the region in March 2016 despite countless obstacles, and both his Personal Envoy and his Special Representative for Western Sahara had made great efforts, and they deserved the international community's effective support.

39. Until Western Sahara was decolonized, it was essential to monitor human rights in the Territory as well as the exploitation of its natural resources, as had been made clear in the Secretary-General's latest report to the Security Council. Both the African Union Legal Adviser and the European Court of Justice had also issued their respective legal opinions in that regard.

40. Algeria commended the Special Committee's decision to hold a special session on Western Sahara, bearing in mind that the region's peace and future were at stake. The Special Committee should also consider carrying out a fact-finding mission in Western Sahara to see where the truth lay. The patience of three generations of Sahrawis should not continue to be tested.

41. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that the signing of the Madrid Accord between Morocco and Spain had irreversibly ended the colonization of Moroccan Sahara and definitively marked its return to its hor eland, Morocco. That would have signalled the removal of the Saharan question from the United Nations agenda but for the hostility of Algeria, whose hegemonic designs on the region and archaic Cold-War-era outlook persisted, in spite of its shared history with Morocco and the rules of good-neighbourly relations. Algeria relentlessly undermined his country's territorial integrity by using as a weapon the principle of self-determination, which had never been synonymous with separatism or secession; paragraph 6 of the basic resolution 1514 (XV) made it clear that any attempt to disrupt a country's national unity or territorial integrity was "incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations". It was therefore vital to preserve the spirit and letter of the principle of territorial integrity, which applied to all peoples, regardless of their political status.

42. Pursuant to Article 12, paragraph 1, of the Charter, the General Assembly should have discontinued consideration of the Saharan question since 1988, once the Security Council became seized of the issue. Unfortunately, the question of Moroccan Sahara had remained on the Fourth Committee's agenda, in violation of that Article — a unique case in the history of the Assembly. In the interests of the credibility of the United Nations and its ability to resolve the regional crisis, Morocco therefore called on the Assembly to respect the Charter and the functions assigned to the Security Council. He recalled that the Council was dealing with the Saharan question as a dispute under Chapter VI and that, consequently, none of the 63 Security Council resolutions referred to decolonization or occupied territory. Similarly, none of the 82 reports by the Secretary-General presented the issue from a decolonization perspective. The qualification of the question as a regional dispute was therefore substantiated.

43. Despite claims to contrary, the Sahara had always been, and would forever remain, Moroccan. That was the profound conviction of the Moroccan peoples, from Tangiers to Lagouira. The people of the Sahara region had demonstrated their devotion to their homeland by having the highest regional participation rates in the recent national legislative elections, which had been held without incident, as confirmed by all national and international observers. Through the electoral process, in which they had been participating for over 40 years, the Saharans had elected their true representatives to the Moroccan Parliament, exercising their right to self-determination in all freedom, in line with the Charter and international law. In 2015, the Saharan people had warmly and proudly welcomed their king, Muhammad VI on his historic visit to the southern provinces commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the glorious Green March, during which visit he had launched a new regional development model with a budget of US$ 8 billion.

44. Since the return of the Sahara region to its homeland, the Kingdom had reinvested $7 for every $1 of revenue generated there. The Saharan region's social indicators, which were at their lowest in 1975, were currently the highest in the country and surpassed those of several neighbouring countries. The Moroccan proposal for an autonomy statute, which aimed to break the stalemate and find a lasting solution to the regional dispute, had been described as "serious and credible" in 11 successive Security Council resolutions. It was and would remain the sole option for a political settlement. The King had reiterated that Morocco would make no further concessions than those in the proposal, which complied with the obligation for a lasting political solution under the auspices of the United Nations. Morocco welcomed the widespread international support for the initiative. However, instead of embracing the positive momentum it offered, the other parties had opted for equivocation and the status quo, clinging to plans that had been discarded by the Council and the Secretary-General. Algeria must assume its responsibilities and conduct itself in accordance with its true role as a protagonist in the regional dispute. That country could not continue its surreptitious machinations and back-office proposals with impunity and must cease its sabotage of all

attempts to find a solution while hiding behind its imagined status of "observer", which deceived no one.

45. The efforts Morocco had made to promote and protect human rights throughout the country, and in particular in the Sahara region, were widely recognized. Unfortunately, the same could not be said of the camps in Tindouf, Algeria, where the captive populations, in addition to suffering human rights violations, had for several decades been deprived of humanitarian aid sent to them by international donors. Reports by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) had confirmed the large-scale diversion of humanitarian aid for the benefit of Frente Polisario and Algerian officials. Recent revelations also confirmed that Algeria levied a value-added tax on humanitarian aid products destined for the needy refugees in Tindouf. One wondered how a country could allow itself to generate significant revenue at the expense of a suffering, sequestered people.

46. The large-scale diversion was the direct result of the host country's non-compliance with the statutory obligation to hold a census in the Tindouf camps, in flagrant violation of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Security Council resolutions dating back to 2011, and the Secretary-General's recommendations. It was time to stop hiding the true size of the camp population from the international community; the reality was that there were fewer than 30,000 refugees. If the host country contested that number, it should take up the challenge to allow UNHCR to conduct the census.

47. Those captive refugees lived under the yoke of a dictatorial, non-State political and military entity that violated human rights and whose leadership, imposed by Algiers, remained in place for life. Notwithstanding its denials, the responsibility of Algeria in the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara was irrefutable. Algeria provided political and military support to the Frente Polisario; used diplomatic efforts to vilify and alienate Morocco; and intimidated delegations that opposed the Algerian position and petitioners appearing before the Committee. It was Algeria that earmarked an undisclosed budget, using taxpayer contributions to finance a separatist group with ties to international and regional terrorism. It was Algeria that had proposed the partition of the Sahara to the former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Baker, and then rejected the Baker Plan. It was Algeria that submitted proposals, without assuming the responsibility, and co-sponsored draft resolutions on the question of the Sahara. It was Algeria that recruited and incited young Saharans to commit violence and acts of vandalism in the Moroccan Sahara. Those were not the actions of an observer. Algeria must stop deceiving the international community and its own people with its pretence of defending the principle of self-determination; it was only deluding itself.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

48. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were part of Argentine national territory. As they were being illegitimately occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two countries, as had been recognized by various international organizations and repeatedly in successive General Assembly resolutions, all of which had urged the two Governments to resume negotiations as soon as possible in order to find a peaceful, lasting solution to the dispute.

49. Argentina rejected the British white paper in all aspects related to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, as set out in a formal protest by his Government. Argentina also rejected all unilateral actions undertaken by the United Kingdom in those archipelagos and surrounding maritime areas, and continued to reject any reference by the United Kingdom to those Argentine territories as "British Overseas Territories", as well as its inclusion of the so-called "British Antarctic Territory" among its Overseas Territories.

50. The right to self-determination of peoples subjected to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation did not apply in the case of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The illegitimate "referendum" held there had been a unilateral exercise that in no way changed the colonial essence of the question; it could not resolve the sovereignty dispute and had no effect on the

inalienable rights of Argentina or the work of the Special Committee. Any attempt to allow the British population on the islands to arbitrate a dispute to which their own country was a party distorted the right of self-determination of peoples, given that the situation did not involve a people subjugated, dominated or exploited by a colonial Power. The interests of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina.

51. The recent joint communiqué between the United Kingdom and Argentina reflected their political will to resume negotiations on all issues relating to the South Atlantic without exclusion and under the formula on sovereignty set out in paragraph 2 of the joint statement of 19 October 1989. While negotiations, understandings and specific agreements were preconditions for progress on those issues, the suspension of all unilateral actions by the United Kingdom in the disputed territories would be a first step towards creating a climate conducive to the identification of areas of cooperation. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of its national territory.

52. **Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria) said that he was compelled to respond to the statement made by the representative of Morocco, which contained too many inaccuracies to refute. He instead recalled Security Council resolutions 371 (1975) and 380 (1975) which called for the immediate withdrawal of Moroccan troops from Western Sahara, and he reiterated that Algeria had no power to manipulate the Council. With regard to the allegations of human rights violations, misappropriation of humanitarian aid and falsification of the number of inhabitants in the Tindouf camps, he questioned why Morocco had refused to admit fact-finding missions by the Special Committee and the Security Council. Furthermore, it was not Algeria, but Morocco, that had carved up the Territory like a cake in 1975, and the Frente Polisario had won the ensuing war in 1977. In addition, if all Sahrawis were thrilled and happy, unlike their counterparts in the camps, he asked why Morocco continued to block a referendum that would allow the allegedly captive refugees to express their desire for freedom.

53. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that he had prepared two statements for the meeting: the first dealt, inter alia, with doctrine, political processes and the role of the Security Council and General Assembly, without assigning blame to anyone. However, he had been forced to deliver the second in the light of the Algerian representative's inflammatory remarks. To illustrate his country's good faith, he recalled that during the last two sessions both countries had stuck to matters of doctrine relating to self-determination and territorial integrity and though they had differed in their interpretation, they had not attacked each other outright. Turning to the issue of the referendum in the Sahara region, he recalled that the former Secretary-General, Mr. Annan, had said that it was inapplicable because of the disagreement on the electorate. The Moroccan autonomy proposal did provide for a referendum among the Saharan population on a mutually acceptable political agreement. Morocco had not created or pushed for a political solution; it held no sway over the Security Council, but merely complied with its resolutions and was committed to negotiating a political solution in which there would be no winners or losers — all that stood to be gained was peace and stability.

54. The human rights violations in Tindouf had not been reported by Morocco, but by several humanitarian actors and former refugees. He could cite the case of a former Frente Polisario official who had deserted to Morocco and had since been unable to see his family who were still sequestered in the camps, despite his protests. Algeria did not have a monopoly on poignant stories. Furthermore, he invited the Algerian representative to read the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/355), which confirmed that Moroccan elections had been conducted without incident. Calm, development and democracy characterized the Sahara region, where leaders were elected from among the population, including a former Frente Polisario official. The problem was that for Morocco's neighbours and those who supported that organization, only the inhabitants of the camps were considered good "Sahrawis" — the moment they fled in search of democracy and self-determination, they were discredited and, as evidenced at a recent regional seminar of the Special Committee, not allowed to speak.

55. He hoped that the discussions at the current meeting would remain civil and focus on doctrine, for

the dispute could be solved by the Security Council alone, not by self-appointed mediators from the region. Algeria had rejected the Baker proposal, which Morocco had accepted and which could have spared the region so much suffering. Too many occasions to achieve peace had been lost. Morocco would never give up hope for a peaceful solution to the dispute, with Algeria and Morocco resuming neighbourly relations and coming together to form the great Maghreb that would face regional development and security challenges as one.

56. **Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria) said that while it would be useless to respond to each of the allegations made, he noted that the Moroccan representative was, in fact, addressing the supposedly irrelevant Fourth Committee and that the current Secretary-General had stated in 2015 that the Moroccan autonomy plan was no longer valid. His delegation reiterated that negotiations must resume between the two parties, which were Morocco and the Frente Polisario. He therefore urged Morocco to begin talks and asked why that country was afraid to do so. Algeria was also committed to building a positive future and that would be possible only if Morocco and the Frente Polisario came to the negotiating table.

57. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) recalled that it was not Morocco that had deemed the referendum in the Sahara inapplicable, but the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council (S/2000/131) and the then Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Mr. Van Walsum, who had subsequently been forced to resign because Algeria had declared him persona non grata. There was no good or bad plan, only the plan endorsed by the United Nations; Morocco had accepted the Baker plan from the outset and it was the rejection by Algeria that had led to its failure.

58. Morocco was being asked to negotiate with the Frente Polisario, while the strings were being pulled in Algiers. Algeria had proposed establishing a commonwealth, along the lines of the European principalities like Andorra. Morocco was ready to hold discussions and he invited his Algerian brothers to bring such proposals to the negotiating table, with Mr. Ross, instead of holding unilateral "brainstorming" sessions in the thirty-eighth-floor offices of the Secretariat, for that was no way to resolve the dispute. The Frente Polisario did not have decision-making power, but was merely an instrument for implementing Algerian policy; that was why his delegation had the long-held belief that Algeria must participate in the negotiations. The people in the camps were family and Morocco had always wished for their reintegration into the Moroccan Sahara. It was time to let them out of the camps and allow them to come home to end the dispute once and for all.

59. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolutions before it under agenda items 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58, none of which had any programme budget implications.

Draft resolution I. Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations, submitted under agenda item 54 (A/71/23 (chap. XIII))

60. **Mr. Perry** (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that, as in previous years, the United Kingdom would abstain in the vote on the draft resolution. His Government did not take issue with its main objective, which was to seek compliance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, and would continue to meet its own obligations fully in that regard in respect of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. It believed, however, that the decision as to whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory had reached a level of self-government sufficient to relieve the administering Power of the obligation to submit information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter ultimately fell to the government of the Territory and the administering Power concerned, and not to the General Assembly.

61. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland,

Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Central African Republic, France, Guinea-Bissau, Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

62. *Draft resolution I was adopted by 156 votes to none, with 6 abstentions.*

Draft resolution IV: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, submitted under agenda item 55 (A/71/23 (chap. XIII))

63. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

64. *Draft resolution IV was adopted by 157 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.*

65. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that he had voted in favour of the resolution on the understanding that it did not apply in situations where the right to self-determination did not exist. A number of General Assembly resolutions had determined that a sovereignty dispute was at the core of the question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, the original inhabitants of which had been replaced illegally with British citizens. All the resolutions expressly stated that only negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom could settle the question. Moreover, in 1985 when the United Kingdom had submitted two proposals for inclusion in the draft resolution on the matter, the General Assembly had explicitly ruled out the applicability of self-determination to the case. Furthermore, since resolution 31/49 urged both parties to refrain from taking decisions that would result in unilateral modifications to the situation, unilateral exploration and exploitation by the United Kingdom of the renewable and non-renewable resources in the aforementioned areas was therefore in open contravention of that resolution.

Draft resolution III: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations, submitted under agenda item 56 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

66. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

67. *Draft resolution III was adopted by 112 votes to none, with 50 abstentions.*

68. **Mr. Perry** (United Kingdom) said that although his Government supported the specialized agencies and their efforts to provide assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the humanitarian, educational and technical fields in particular, the statutes of those agencies should be carefully respected. For that reason, his delegation had abstained during the voting.

69. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that he had voted in favour of the resolution on the understanding that it would be implemented in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and Special Committee on decolonization.

Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.3: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories, submitted under agenda item 57

70. *Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.3 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.4: Question of Western Sahara, submitted under agenda item 58*

71. **Mr. Dabouis** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; and speaking in explanation of position before the decision, said that the European Union and its member States looked forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus. They reaffirmed their full support for the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter, and encouraged the parties to work within the United Nations framework. The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy was also making commendable efforts to consult with the parties and neighbouring States, and they in turn should cooperate with him to advance towards a more intensive phase of negotiations, in good faith and without preconditions, taking note of developments since 2006, as advocated by the many subsequent Security Council resolutions. The agreed method of shuttle diplomacy by the Personal Envoy seemed to offer a way forward.

72. The European Union welcomed the agreement reached between the United Nations and Morocco allowing MINURSO to return to full functionality, and encouraged the parties to cooperate with the Mission. They should also work more closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on confidence-building measures. Excellent progress had been made in implementing and expanding them, especially with regard to family visits, and that programme would unquestionably improve the political climate as well. UNHCR should also, at the urging of the Security Council, continue to consider the registration of refugees in the Tindouf camps.

73. Lastly, concerned by the consequences of the Western Sahara conflict on security and cooperation in the region, the European Union noted with satisfaction the decision by Morocco to rejoin the African Union.

74. *Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.4* was adopted.*

Draft resolution VI: Question of Tokelau, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

75. *Draft resolution VI was adopted.*

Draft resolution VII: Question of American Samoa, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

76. *Draft resolution VII was adopted.*

77. **Mr. Perry** (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of position before the decisions, said that his Government would join the consensus on the eight draft resolutions concerning British Overseas Territories submitted under agenda item 58 in order to demonstrate its full support for the right to self-determination, even though some of the language in the draft resolutions was unacceptable. Unfortunately, the Special Committee had failed once again to take into account the positive evolution of the relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories. The latter enjoyed a large measure of internal self-government and had all freely chosen to maintain their links to the United Kingdom. The draft resolutions failed to reflect that modern relationship, which was based on partnership, shared values and the right to self-determination.

Draft resolution VIII: Question of Anguilla, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

78. *Draft resolution VIII was adopted.*

Draft resolution IX: Question of Bermuda, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

79. *Draft resolution IX was adopted.*

Draft resolution X: Question of the British Virgin Islands, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

80. *Draft resolution X was adopted.*

Draft resolution XI: Question of the Cayman Islands, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

81. *Draft resolution XI was* adopted.

Draft resolution XII: Question of Guam, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

82. *Draft resolution XII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XIII: Question of Montserrat, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

83. *Draft resolution XIII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XIV: Question of Pitcairn, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

84. *Draft resolution XIV was adopted.*

Draft resolution XV: Question of Saint Helena, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

85. *Draft resolution XV was adopted.*

Draft resolution XVI: Question of the Turks and Caicos Islands, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

86. *Draft resolution XVI was adopted.*

Draft resolution XVII: Question of the United States Virgin Islands, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

87. *Draft resolution XVII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XVIII: Question of New Caledonia, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

88. *Draft resolution XVIII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XIX: Question of French Polynesia, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

89. *Draft resolution XIX was adopted.*

Draft resolution II: Dissemination of information on decolonization, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23, chap. XIII))

90. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, Togo.

91. *Draft resolution II was adopted by 157 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions.*

92. **Mr. Perry** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had voted against the resolution. The obligation it placed on the Secretariat to publicize decolonization issues represented an unwarranted drain

on United Nations resources and was therefore unacceptable.

93. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that he had voted in favour of the resolution on the understanding that it would be interpreted and implemented in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions. The General Assembly and the Special Committee expressly referred to the question of the Malvinas Islands as a special situation involving a sovereignty dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina. That dispute should be resolved urgently through a just, peaceful and lasting negotiated settlement that took into account the interests of the populations of the islands.

94. **Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee on decolonization, said that with the support of the Decolonization Unit, the Special Committee had for the first time drafted for the Committee's consideration 11 separate resolutions on small Territories, under agenda item 58, in place of the discontinued omnibus resolution on those Territories.

95. **The Chair** said that, having adopted all the draft resolutions under the items under consideration, the Committee would at a later meeting consider a remaining draft decision on the question of Gibraltar, under agenda item 58.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/71/SR.8

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Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 11 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Drobnjak ..... (Croatia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 58: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*) (A/71/23 (chap. XIII))

Draft resolution V: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, submitted under agenda item 58 (A/71/23 (chap. XIII))

1. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Canada, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Against:

Côte d'Ivoire, Israel, Morocco, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Colombia, France.

2. *Draft resolution V was adopted by 130 votes to 5, with 2 abstentions.*

3. **Mr. Perry** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation continued to find some elements of the resolution unacceptable and had therefore once more voted against it. It nonetheless remained committed to modernizing its relationship with its Overseas Territories while taking fully into account the views of the people of those Territories.

4. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that visiting missions could be sent only to Territories to which the right of self-determination applied, meaning Territories where there was no dispute over sovereignty. That requirement was fully in line with General Assembly resolution 850 (IX), which also established the requirement that any visiting mission must be approved by the General Assembly. It was also in line with the practice of the Special Committee, as evidenced in its regional seminars and declarations that visiting missions must be sent on a case-by-case basis and carried out in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

5. **Ms. Patel** (United States of America) said that her delegation fully supported the right to self-determination but had voted against the draft resolution because it remained concerned by the fact that the Special Committee continued to call for the independence of certain Territories, irrespective of the will of the people in those Territories. While joining the consensus on Territory-specific resolutions, as in previous years, the United States nevertheless called on the Special Committee to respect the right of a Territory's people freely to choose its political status in relation to the administering State, including when a Territory chose to be in free association with, or integrate into, that State.

6. **Ms. Pedros Carretero** (Spain) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the resolution on the basis of its support for the principle of self-determination. In cases involving a sovereignty

dispute, however, such as in that of Gibraltar, it was the principle of territorial integrity that applied, taking into account in particular General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), paragraph 6, and General Assembly resolution 2353 (XXII). She reiterated that visiting missions could be dispatched only to Territories where the right to self-determination was at stake and only with General Assembly approval, which was indeed the practice followed by the Special Committee.

Agenda item 48: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/71/20 and A/C.4/71/L.2)

7. **The Chair**, introducing the item, said that there were substantial links between the main pillars of the pivotal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the potential challenges to the security and sustainability of outer space activities, and the global challenges to humanity and planet Earth. In seeking collectively to secure the future use of space assets in the interest of sustainable development, the planet Earth and its near-Earth environment as a whole, the international community must remain mindful of the outstanding role of space science and technology applications in a wide range of areas relating to, among others, poverty eradication, biodiversity and disaster management. The Sustainable Development Goals provided a unique opportunity for reflection on the future role of space exploration, science and technology as indispensable tools for addressing global challenges. In short, development, sustainability and space security went hand in hand in the process of forming global space governance for the benefit of all humanity.

8. **Ms. Di Pippo** (Director, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs), presenting an exhibition catalogue containing spectacular images of Earth from space that had been circulated to delegations in the room, said that the exhibition, "My planet from space: fragility and beauty", had recently been organized at United Nations Headquarters by her Office and the European Space Agency with the aim of emphasizing both the beauty and the fragility of the planet and the need to protect it. In addition to spreading that core message, the images in the catalogue demonstrated the vital contribution that space technology could make towards successful implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015-2013, the Paris Agreement governing climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals through its ability to monitor activities on Earth.

9. **Mr. Kendall** (Canada), speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and introducing the report of its fifty-ninth session (A/71/20), expressed a warm welcome to the six new States members of the Committee, which had also endorsed another membership application, and said that the growing COPUOS membership confirmed both the increasing importance attached to cooperation in outer space affairs, including in connection with indigenous and collaborative space assets, and the legitimacy of COPUOS as the key forum for international cooperation in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of humanity, in accordance with the ever-pertinent General Assembly resolution 1472 (XIV) adopted in 1959. Rapid and dramatic changes in the utilization, exploration and exploitation of outer space for peaceful purposes had, however, added complexity and unforeseen challenges to the Committee's work, resulting in the need for greater compromise and collegiality in order for progress to be made in some of the more difficult negotiations on issues relating to the Committee's mandate. Significant positive dialogue had indeed been achieved as a result of the collegial approach adopted in working for constructive and consensual solutions to those issues, with discussions invariably focused on providing substantive input, improving the safety and security of the space environment and assisting all States to benefit from the utilization of space, irrespective of their stage of economic, scientific or technical development.

10. The Committee had identified seven thematic priorities for use as guidance in developing the agenda for the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, UNISPACE+50, to be held in 2018, which would provide an opportunity for assessing the current status and charting the future role of COPUOS and the Office as important players in the area of global space governance. Those priorities were: global partnership in space exploration and innovation; the current and future legal regime of outer space and global space governance; enhanced information exchange on space objects and events; the international framework for space weather services; strengthened

space cooperation for global health; international cooperation towards low-emission and resilient societies; and capacity-building for the twenty-first century.

11. In that overall context, space exploration and innovation would continue to be essential drivers in opening up new domains in space science and technology, triggering other sectors to partner with the space sector in the development of new joint research and development initiatives. With partnerships and capabilities developed through space exploration creating new opportunities for addressing global challenges, it was essential to enhance capacity-building and strengthen partnerships between established spacefaring States and emerging space nations. Outer space was nevertheless also a fragile environment easily affected by the broader applications of space operations and the increased strategic value of space, which called for measures to improve its safety, security and sustainability, by such means as more robust information exchange and notification procedures on space objects and events, including risk reduction efforts.

12. The cross-cutting elements of various parallel initiatives would need to be studied to that end, as well as in order to protect an already fragile near-Earth space environment, expand the role of space and technology applications in meeting the growing challenges to humanity, societal development and Earth itself, and connect to established transparency and confidence-building mechanisms and platforms so as to make space operations more sustainable. For its part, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs stood ready to assist in the development of additional mechanisms for the enhancement of information exchange and notification procedures, predominantly with respect to orbital data and information, by building on the existing treaty-based platform it maintained for that purpose, which included the Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

13. Taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he said that global development would not only continue its reliance on the use of space tools but would also call for the long-term sustainability of space-related activities and the outer space environment, free from conflict and for the common benefit of all humanity, with the interrelationship and dialogue between major spacefaring nations and emerging space nations as fundamental prerequisites. Indeed, the evolution and success of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space continued to provide impetus for future international processes and infrastructures relating to space cooperation and coordination mechanisms at the international, regional, interregional and national levels.

14. In the light of the cross-cutting issues that would ultimately strengthen the common space endeavour at the United Nations, and given the opportunity provided by UNISPACE+50 to sharpen the shared vision on that score, he suggested various avenues for consideration, such as: increasing the COPUOS membership so as to strengthen cooperation between spacefaring and emerging space nations from all geographical regions and promoting the universality of United Nations treaties on outer space, by encouraging their ratification by all COPUOS members; further developing ongoing dialogue on space-related activities with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that had permanent observer status with the Committee and building on the Committee's close relationship with regional and interregional coordination mechanisms; strengthening the role of the Office in supporting the orderly conduct of space activities and in advancing capacity-building for all nations, in particular developing countries; enhancing coordination and dialogue between COPUOS and its Subcommittees in order to strengthen their common output in the interest of all nations; and supporting the recommendation of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities by encouraging active and substantive dialogue between the First and Fourth Committees of the General Assembly on addressing challenges relating to space security and sustainability.

15. It was greatly satisfying that the Committee and its Subcommittees continued to demonstrate their collective abilities to discuss, debate and actively formulate in a collegial manner ideas, resolutions and agendas pertaining to contemporary and future matters of critical importance to the world's populations, providing the backbone of UNISPACE+50 and beyond. As a result, the fundamental processes related to an international response to the near-Earth object impact

threat had been established; attention was being focused on global health and space weather; and new items on legal aspects of space traffic management, the application of international law to small satellite activities, and potential models for activities in exploration, exploitation and utilization of space resources, were providing incentives for important exchanges of views. Annexed to the Committee's report, the first set of draft Guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities represented a milestone achievement in a process set to continue over the coming two years towards a more comprehensive set of proposed guidelines. In the busy years ahead, UNISPACE+50 was simply the beginning of more inclusive space governance that, as part of the collective efforts to reshape the global space dialogue, would strengthen space economy, space society, space accessibility and space diplomacy.

16. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that outer space must be used and explored for exclusively peaceful purposes, strictly for the benefit of all countries, irrespective of the degree of their development, and in accordance with international law and the principle of the non-appropriation of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies. International cooperation was essential to the furtherance of space activities aimed at improving human lives. Space technology and its applications were indispensable in providing viable solutions to many development challenges and helping to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and ASEAN therefore encouraged COPUOS to pursue its efforts to those ends.

17. Given the vulnerability of South-East Asia to natural disaster, ASEAN attached high importance to the role of space-based technologies in furnishing valuable data that enhanced disaster risk preparedness, response and mitigation capacities, a role that was indeed recognized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Capacity-building must be provided, however, to help developing countries reap the full benefit of such technologies. ASEAN also supported efforts aimed at strengthening the governance framework for outer space on the basis of a transparent and all-inclusive governmental process, within the United Nations ambit, and with full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and equal access for all States. All must work intensively to prevent the possibility of an arms race in outer space while, for its part, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee must pursue its discussion of measures for mitigating the serious risks posed by space debris, which should include voluntary implementation of the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of COPUOS.

18. Steps taken by ASEAN to forge closer regional cooperation in the field of space technology included its support for the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Training Centre for Space Technology and Applications, the main objectives of which were to increase space capacity-building among ASEAN nations, share common facilities in space technology and relevant applications, and build a shared platform for technology transfer, knowledge enhancement and human resources development. ASEAN had also hosted a number of regional and international conferences and workshops on outer space and would remain actively focused on exploring and harnessing the peaceful uses of outer space.

19. Speaking in her national capacity, she underscored the significance of General Assembly resolution 70/82 on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, with particular reference to paragraphs 12 and 13, and such cooperation had to be fully inclusive by providing support to developing countries. It was also important to assess obstacles to the implementation of space law, and all countries must therefore continue to participate in the deliberations aimed at reaching a consensus on the definition and delimitation of outer space. Equitable access to the geostationary-satellite orbit should furthermore be guaranteed to all States, taking into account the special needs of the developing countries and the geographical situation of particular countries.

20. She expressed appreciation for the tireless efforts to find compromise solutions with a view to finalizing the draft Guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and described the Indonesian contribution to various processes in the area of outer space utilization, including through workshops on the use of space-based information in emergency response situations and of multi-global navigation satellite systems (GNSS). Indonesia had recently launched its third low-Earth orbit microsatellite and would continue

working to ensure that outer space was used peacefully and solely for the betterment of all humanity.

21. **Ms. Yánez Loza** (Ecuador), expressing full support for the work of COPUOS and emphasizing the crucial importance of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, said that industrialized countries must pool their resources to facilitate the implementation of space application programmes in developing countries, for solidarity as well had to be globalized. In cataloguing the human and economic consequences of the natural disasters to which her country and others were particularly vulnerable, she also expressed continuing support for the United Nations Platform of Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), now in its tenth year of operation, and urged the Office to intensify its related capacity-building activities in vulnerable countries so as to facilitate their disaster mitigation, rescue and prevention efforts. She noted, too, the emphasis given in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction to the role of space-based technology and Earth observation in disaster management and emergency response.

22. The work of COPUOS should include a significant focus on the promotion of space technologies in the context of sustainable development, notably with the aim of supporting global health for the public good and strengthening space community initiatives for achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In that context, the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should give priority to such areas as environmental protection, natural resources management, satellite-based distance learning and telemedicine, disaster risk reduction, GNSS and space law.

23. In Ecuador, the use of space technologies was central to the protection of food sovereignty and had helped the Ecuadorian Space Institute develop forecast models for assessing the impact of climate change on staple crops. Another priority for Ecuador was to ensure equitable access to and use of the geostationary-satellite orbit, and COPUOS must continue to try to define a legal framework in that area, but without excluding the possible adoption of a related international regime that would take into account the special needs of the developing countries and the geographical situation of particular countries, in accordance with article 44, paragraph 2, of the Constitution of the International Telecommunication Union. Her Government, in its commitment to the use and exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes emphasized the treaty-based principles of universal and equal access to outer space, without discrimination, and the non-appropriation of outer space.

24. International space law must be further developed in order to prevent the militarization and weaponization of outer space and thus ensure its use for peaceful purposes in the interest of improving life on Earth. To that end, UNISPACE+50 would provide the opportunity to examine compliance with international regulations on the use of outer space in the light of such universally accepted principles as the prohibition of the use or threat of force, which was crucial to forestalling an arms race in outer space and the grave danger it would pose to international peace and security.

25. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that his Government recognized the sovereign right of all States to participate in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes that benefited human development. It was therefore firmly committed to the principles laid down in that regard, in particular those concerning equal access to outer space for all, without discrimination or regard for degrees of development; non-appropriation of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, by any State under any pretext; non-militarization of outer space and its use, as the common heritage of humanity, strictly for enhancing living conditions and peace on Earth; and regional and international cooperation in the development of space activities.

26. Greater cooperation for capacity-building was indeed fundamental to enabling developing countries in particular to benefit from the scientific, environmental, medical and educational advances achieved through space activities and the use of space technology. Such cooperation also promoted the exchange of knowledge and good practices, created synergies and increased awareness of the benefits of space activities. Respect for the instruments and laws in place to prevent an arms race in outer space was similarly crucial, and welcome progress on the peaceful uses of outer space had been accomplished by

the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities. The development of clear terminology was vital to the message that the weaponization of outer space was unlawful.

27. In view of the growing use of outer space, other aspects meriting close follow-up included the saturation of the geostationary orbit, debris management and the use of nuclear energy in low-Earth orbits. The issue of the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, however, must under no circumstances be used by established spacefaring nations as an argument for placing restrictions on emerging space nations legitimately working to develop and use space technology in order to improve living standards for their citizens. Space tools, furthermore, played an increasing role in disaster prevention, management and mitigation, as well as in water resources management and climate change mitigation. Technological progress and the involvement of new private actors had enormously accelerated the exploration and use of outer space, making it urgent for COPUOS to be creative in taking up new topics for discussion, in conjunction with the various other forums dealing with outer space issues.

28. **Mr. Gat** (Israel) said that, notwithstanding its domestic challenges, his country had been actively involved in outer space issues from the outset, prioritizing the development of its scientific capacities and know-how to take it to the forefront of innovation, technology and research in that inspiring realm. It saw space as a technological stimulus and the key to a modern society, an advanced information-based economy and the recruitment of highly-skilled professionals. The Israeli Space Agency thus aspired to preserve and extend the country's advantages and place it among the elite of spacefaring nations.

29. Free of borders and territorial divisions, space offered the opportunity to overcome differences and to learn from reciprocal experiences through cooperation leading to heightened understanding, tolerance and indeed global progress. For its part as a COPUOS member, Israel looked forward to enhancing its collaboration in such areas as space systems and subsystems, space science and exploration, Earth observation, communication and navigation. Its commitment to scientific excellence had furthermore encouraged Israeli researchers and private entrepreneurs to work together in exploring the uses of outer space. To that end, Israel had a space-launch capability and numerous active satellites in operation.

30. He outlined some of the milestones demonstrating the Israeli commitment to fulfilment of its space vision, which included the signing of instruments of formal cooperation with the Office, the hosting of international space-related conferences attended also by a number of Arab and Muslim delegations and the organization of a space exploration study programme for participants from across the globe. Cooperation agreements had also been signed with sister agencies by the Israeli Space Agency, which additionally continued to expand links with international partners and had sought to advance projects of benefit to the international community, including through the Israeli collaboration with UN-SPIDER, to which it provided scientific and Earth observation imagery, and the Israeli membership in the Space Mission Planning Advisory Group, seeking ways to avert near-Earth object impact threats. The Israeli Government, moreover, stood ready to support the preparations for UNISPACE+50 and for the era of suborbital flights in cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization. It would likewise continue to cooperate with other countries and to encourage initiatives for promoting innovation with a view to improving the quality of life for Earth's inhabitants and the sustainability of their shared planet.

31. **Mr. Díaz Ortega** (Mexico) said that his country's outer space policy was designed not only to further promote international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes and for the benefit of humankind but also to enhance the related international legal regime. Indeed, Mexico advocated universal application of the five United Nations outer space treaties, to which it was itself a party, in the vital interest of building cooperation, transparency and confidence in the field of space-related activities. It thus called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify them.

32. An unfortunate 20-year paralysis had obstructed the negotiation of new measures for preventing an arms race in outer space, and multilateral negotiations were the way forward towards a new legally-binding international agreement embodying the principles of equity, viability and verification with the aim of

preserving outer space as the common heritage of humanity and prohibiting its use for military purposes. Important as they were, other means of complementing existing instruments and confidence-building and transparency measures were no substitute for such negotiations, because international security was indivisible and must not be compromised for the benefit of any one State or group of States.

33. The primary consideration was to ensure that outer space remained open for peaceful exploration, and for use by all States, in accordance with the legal principles set out in the relevant treaties. To that end, the placement of any arms in outer space, including all weapons of mass destruction, must be prohibited. COPUOS and its Subcommittees were unique platforms for strengthening space-related instruments globally in the service of sustainable development and in order to overcome contemporary challenges. It was consequently essential to develop new capacities and aim at greater coordination between COPUOS and other intergovernmental organizations.

34. **Mr. Lim** (Singapore) said that the growing global reliance on space utilization had brought with it such new challenges as space debris, orbital congestion and the threat of an arms race in outer space, which called for pragmatic measures to ensure responsible behaviour and security. In the United Nations context alone, spatial applications were crucial to enhancing the safety and security of peacekeepers and civilians; improving situational awareness and in turn enhancing the effectiveness of peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, disaster relief and disaster risk reduction operations; and monitoring the environmental footprint. An open and inclusive international framework for governing activities in outer space had to be developed and maintained as a peaceful global commons, and Singapore was committed to working for consensus on the norms required to that end.

35. As a party to three of the United Nations treaties on outer space, Singapore welcomed the proposals of the Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space as a means of advancing the discussions pertaining to a multilateral code of conduct and to capacity-building initiatives. It also welcomed the idea of more inclusive consultations within the COPUOS framework through the participation of non-Committee members and, with a view to facilitating substantive exchanges and improving synergies, it additionally looked forward to a repeat of the joint ad hoc meeting of the First and Fourth Committees held in 2015 to discuss possible challenges to space security and sustainability.

36. He described his country as a nascent player in the space domain, but the activities of its recently established Office for Space Technology and Industry already included four satellite launches from India in support of urban planning and disaster management across Southeast Asia, as well as active participation in an ASEAN regional workshop on space security and in negotiations organized by the European Union concerning the draft International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. Singapore was also shortly due to co-host with the United States a workshop on space hazards, transparency and confidence-building measures for enhancing space security, a sign of its commitment to the regional and multilateral efforts to build international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space.

37. **Mr. Steele** (New Zealand) said that his country was not currently a space-capable State but that, in 2016, the first commercial rocket was due to be launched into outer space from its territory by a New Zealand company. It was extremely serious about its responsibilities as a country hosting space launches and indeed its Parliament was currently considering a bill on the safe, secure and responsible operation of the country's developing space industry that would also ensure compliance with international space obligations. Already a party to three of the United Nations treaties on outer space, New Zealand had signalled its intention to accede to a fourth, the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space.

38. Given its reliance on assured access to space-based systems to support its economic prosperity and maintain public safety, New Zealand was clearly interested in working with international partners, including as a new member of COPUOS, to promote the responsible and peaceful use of space. It was particularly interested in the work of COPUOS and its Subcommittees in such areas as the long-term sustainability of outer space activities and the application of relevant international space law obligations to the space activities of private companies;

and looked forward to the opportunity to exchange expertise and make a valuable contribution.

39. **Mr. Ntsoane** (South Africa) said that, recognizing the potentially immense contribution of the peaceful use of outer space to sustainable development, his country wished to harness space system applications in order to promote economic growth, poverty reduction and knowledge creation. At the regional level, it cooperated with Kenya, Nigeria and Algeria in the operation of a constellation of low-Earth-orbiting satellites, representing a major feat for the African space industry insofar as the data and information collected would increase technological capacities across the continent.

40. At the global level, South Africa was committed to working for the development of international norms governing the use of outer space and consequently attached great importance to the work of COPUOS. Outer space was the heritage of all humankind, meaning that all States must benefit from its use. The principles of fairness, equal access and non-discrimination must accordingly remain central to any discussions concerning that use. In that context, he called for greater cooperation among States for building the capacity also of human resources in space-related matters.

41. **Ms. Abdullah** (Malaysia) said that her country had achieved progress in its space activities during 2016, notably in the field of space applications, which had been harnessed for use in grass-roots projects involving the use of geographical positioning system (GPS) signals. Describing three examples of such projects, she related that GPS signals were used in the first case to set virtual boundaries for managing the movement of autistic children; in the second case, to enable paramedics to locate the critically ill within the shortest possible time frame once the patient had pressed a triggering button; and in the third case, to help local authorities manage their municipalities by way of a smart service-delivery engine developed using geospatial technology.

42. Malaysia was also taking part in the Sentinel Asia initiative for applying remote sensing and online geographic information system (GIS) technologies in support of disaster management, to which end it received and analysed data from numerous satellites in the Asia-Pacific region. Under another cooperation initiative, likewise thanks to assistance from the Japanese Government, it played a leading role in two space biology research projects involving Asian seeds and herbs. Its National Space Agency had, furthermore, recently organized school programmes that had included a live telecommunication session with a Japanese astronaut on board the International Space Station. Since economic and technological development was increasingly dependent on space technology, the use and exploration of outer space as the common heritage of humankind must be pursued for exclusively peaceful purposes.

43. **Mr. Perren** (Switzerland), highlighting the unique role played by COPUOS as a global platform for governance and the all-vital international cooperation in space, said that the Committee's final approval of the first set of draft Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities was the result of diligent work, the informed support of its Chair and the Secretariat, and a willingness to compromise. Continuation of that same constructive spirit and degree of flexibility would surely lead to the successful compilation of a full compendium of draft Guidelines for referral to the General Assembly in 2018.

44. Switzerland was involved in the expert groups dealing with two of the thematic priorities selected by the Committee for possible discussion during UNISPACE+50, namely, the international framework for space weather services, and strengthened space cooperation for global health, and it planned to host a workshop on the latter topic in 2017 with a view to strengthening synergies with the activities of Geneva-based organizations. It also looked forward to the establishment of an expert group on the thematic priority of enhanced information exchange on space objects and events, and echoed the calls for closer coordination between the two Subcommittees of COPUOS.

45. Without safety and security, the long-term sustainability of outer space activities could not be guaranteed. Switzerland therefore encouraged working together more productively in holistically addressing the sustainability, safety and security challenges in outer space activities, and welcomed the increased cooperation between the Office, the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations

Institute for Disarmament Research. He expressed support for the organization of an interactive round table of the First and Fourth Committees at the current session in the hope that such an interchange would shape the coming stages of effective collaboration.

46. **Mr. Malik** (Pakistan), commending the role of COPUOS in facilitating a convergence of views on key scientific, technical and regulatory issues, said that space technologies had evolved dramatically and that outer space activities had moved beyond the realm of technological demonstration into pragmatic applications for national security and the socioeconomic uplift of the masses. It was important that there be more international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, a greater utilization of space-based resources, and the sharing of experiences and expertise in the field of satellite-enabled applications, in particular for disaster risk reduction, management and mitigation. Pakistan was very involved in the work of the various international, regional and other space-related forums of which it was a member, while at the national level it was utilizing space-based resources to enhance its socioeconomic development through projects relating to, inter alia, disaster management support, crop mask development and forest resource assessment for emission reduction purposes.

47. Maintenance of the safety, security and sustainability of outer space was a collective responsibility entailing the vital goal of achieving the long-term sustainability of space activities, including through space debris mitigation. Emerging spacefaring nations, however, were mostly developing countries lacking in the financial and technical resources needed for full compliance with the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of COPUOS and should therefore be provided with situational awareness and conjunction assessment risk analysis systems, as well as with assistance from advanced spacefaring nations for absorbing additional costs incurred as a result of spacecraft design modifications. To limit the access of new entrants to the spacefaring world by setting overly-high technical standards would be contrary to the provisions of the relevant treaties and General Assembly resolutions. Research, best practices, technologies and early warning information should also be made available to all stakeholders with a view to preventing space debris from compromising the harnessing of potential gains from outer space.

48. Pakistan had consistently opposed the militarization and weaponization of outer space, which would pose a grave threat to humanity and to the future of space operations, including by impeding progress towards their long-term sustainability. The failure of the current international legal regime to prohibit such weaponization should therefore be addressed in a legally-binding treaty on the subject. As a party to the five United Nations treaties on outer space, Pakistan supported the negotiations already under way in that domain and remained committed to the peaceful use of outer space, an area in which training and capacity-building for developing countries should be increased so as to provide access for all to the benefits.

49. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as a founding member of COPUOS, his country attached great importance to outer space as a common heritage of humankind and to its exploration and use by all States for peaceful purposes only as an inalienable right on the basis of equality and the principle of non-ownership. Outer space must also remain a non-military and weapon-free zone; the monopolization of space and space technology by the few must be avoided; and the science, technologies and applications for access to outer space must be made available to all, without discrimination.

50. It followed that cooperation must be freely extended to developing countries, including through the transfer of all space-related know-how as a tool for socioeconomic development, and that all States, irrespective of the degree of their development, must have access to the geostationary orbit. The definition and delimitation of outer space must furthermore be carefully considered and agreed by consensus. With its negative impact on the sustainable use of outer space, the worrying problem of space debris should also be urgently addressed, and primarily by those who created the debris, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

51. In the development of its space programme, the Islamic Republic of Iran accorded high priority to international cooperation, particularly within the framework of COPUOS, where it had always made constructive contributions to the work in progress. A disaster-prone country, it was also an active partner of

UN-SPIDER and indeed hosted its Regional Support Office, in addition to which it was a founding member of the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization and cooperated widely on space-related matters with various regional and international organizations. His delegation was concerned, however, by the annexation of the first set of the draft Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities to the COPUOS report as having been conclusively adopted by the Committee, which was a hasty and unprofessional action inconsistent with the usual practice followed in the case of matters still under discussion. All COPUOS members were entitled to propose amendments to draft guidelines until such time as they were finalized and presented as a whole to the General Assembly for possible adoption.

52. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that the number of countries engaged in space exploration and the use of space science and technologies for socioeconomic development called for more effective regional and international cooperation in the field. COPUOS and its Subcommittees played a crucial role in promoting efforts to further space exploration and research and in bringing the benefits of space technology to assist achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

53. Mongolia had long been committed to promoting the development and peaceful uses of space science and technology, having established its first space communication station in 1971 and seen its first astronaut accomplish a space mission in 1981. Nonetheless, it had never launched its own satellite and was therefore developing and localizing aerospace and satellite technology with the aim of achieving that goal in 2017 while simultaneously extending its cooperation with other countries. Once launched, the satellite would enable Mongolia to conduct independent space studies, capture geographic images, improve mapping and better prevent natural disasters. It would also enable country-wide access to low-cost wireless communication services and yield benefits for its development projects and programmes. Mongolia was actively cooperating with space-related organizations in the Asia-Pacific region and stood ready to work with COPUOS in preserving outer space for peaceful purposes only.

54. **Mr. Karem** (Iraq) said that the issue of space security was taking on more importance especially because outer space had become a hosting environment for advanced scientific, commercial and military activities. Outer space was an important resource for all, including non-spacefaring nations, in the light of the increasing contribution of space technology and science to, inter alia, navigation, meteorological observation and disaster management. His delegation therefore welcomed the United Nations focus on the development of legal frameworks for the use of outer space, notably through COPUOS, which was leading the joint efforts in such areas as strengthening international cooperation and transparency in order to prevent in-space collisions and curtail the generation of harmful space debris. The outer space treaties adopted by the United Nations, moreover, dealt with such matters as the common interest of all humanity in outer space, the use of outer space for the benefit of all peoples, and efforts to prevent the Moon becoming an area of international conflict, laying down the related principles and establishing the authority of the United Nations in that regard. The legal framework provided by the treaties was complemented by such instruments as the European Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, which emphasized transparency and confidence-building measures as means for achieving space security.

55. International cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space should be aimed at promoting the development of space science, technology and applications and at strengthening capacity-building, with COPUOS playing a key role as a forum for information exchange on related activities at the national and international levels. Thanks to assistance provided through such cooperation, Iraq had been able to launch its first satellite for scientific study purposes in 2014. It was now working to harness the benefits of the peaceful uses of outer space in the area of modern communications and technology, including by sending experts on training courses in developed countries, which would not only enhance its national capabilities but also strengthen cooperation and serve humanity as a whole.

56. Iraq stood firmly opposed to the militarization of outer space and to any other use of outer space that would have damaging consequences for humanity. It also reaffirmed the applicability of international law and the Charter of the United Nations in determining international liability for damage caused by space

objects. Taking into account the interest of future generations, including with respect to the key components of sustainable development, all States must provide information to the United Nations on their activities in outer space with a view to averting the possibility of catastrophic accidents with potentially negative repercussions for global peace.

57. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that his country had achieved significant successes in the outer space field over the past year, which he illustrated by providing details of numerous launch vehicle and satellite missions completed for the purposes of Earth observation, communication and navigation with innovative operational systems. The Indian Mars Orbiter Mission had recently completed two years in the Martian orbit, working beyond its designed lifespan of six months and providing invaluable data for the scientific community on the Martian surface and atmosphere. Additional Earth observation and communication satellites were due to be launched in the coming months and the first developmental launch of a heavy-lift launch vehicle was planned for early 2017.

58. Advances in space technology and applications continued to be integrated into the country's national goals for development and good governance, while at the international level India had concluded formal instruments of cooperation with numerous countries, as well as with international organizations. Its cooperation with others included work on building a microwave remote sensing satellite and on launching joint satellite missions for Earth observation purposes. At the ASEAN level, it was building a communication satellite for launch in 2017 and establishing a ground station to provide data from Indian satellites for such purposes as disaster management, in which context it had also participated in several international mechanisms, including UN-SPIDER and Sentinel Asia.

59. In the area of capacity-building, the Indian Space Research Organization continued to share its facilities and expertise in the application of space science and technology, and thus far there had been some 1,600 beneficiaries in over 50 countries. In 2016, India had hosted a workshop on the use of Earth observation data in disaster management and risk reduction; a meeting of heads of more than 60 space agencies that had adopted the New Delhi Declaration on outer space and climate change; and a regional symposium on remote sensing. It was also currently working on a vision document focused on space applications, space infrastructure, space transportation and capacity-building as a part of India's ongoing endeavour to augment its space infrastructure and resources in order to provide enhanced social benefits to its citizens and humanity through space-based services.

60. **Mr. Leonidchenko** (Russian Federation), noting the positive progress achieved by COPUOS in connection with the UNISPACE+50 agenda and the draft Guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, said that the Russian proposals concerning the text of the guidelines were indicative of his country's pragmatic and straightforward approach to regulating the safety of space operations, an objective vital to preventing situations of conflict, and one that should be pursued in a similar manner by other States. He cautioned against hasty and premature decision-making on matters relating to space traffic management, on which there was a huge body of research but no holistic consideration of the findings. The ideas impartially examined in the working paper submitted to COPUOS on the subject by the Russian Federation thus promised to provide some focus to the discussion, which should remain realistic and be based on a strategy for guaranteeing the safety of space operations in line with robust guidelines for their long-term sustainability. The inclusion of such concepts in the draft Guidelines would indicate the readiness of States, in conducting their respective space activities, to observe new safety and security criteria.

61. Realization of the Russian proposal to establish under United Nations auspices an information platform as an essential tool for guaranteeing the safety of operations in outer space would be a landmark achievement for numerous reasons, although certain security constraints would be unavoidable in relation to, for example, orbital information concerning objects engaged in tasks relating to national security. Such a platform would nonetheless provide opportunities for streamlining the verification and periodic updating of information in a manner that ensured its accuracy.

62. The sustainable safety of space operations was bound up with the level of independent decision-making by operators, taking into account their rights as well as the obligations of the States with jurisdiction

over the space objects concerned, both being relevant to decisions on mitigating potential danger in outer space. Worryingly, international space law was deemed inadequate in academic circles, while the inability to exclude the so-called "big-bang" approach to system reform also portended problems. For its part, the Russian Federation favoured a conservative, realistic and steady approach to space traffic management in which direct analogies with other areas of international law could be intelligently sought.

63. He pointed out linguistic anomalies and difficulties associated with the term "global space governance" that the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs might wish to consider, notably in order to preclude its use by any State as justification for the domination of space. He also expressed surprise at the reaction, whether indifferent, critical or neutral, to the Russian proposal that COPUOS should prioritize analysis of the legal basis and modalities for any resort to self-defence in outer space in the light of the Charter of the United Nations. COPUOS had remained conspicuously aloof on the matter, whereas the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research was busily engaged in addressing the topic in cooperation with the Secure World Foundation.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.